



(U) Eye-Opening Experience in Haiti (part 1)

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The story of an unusual NIST (National Intelligence Support Team) deployment to Port-au-Prince. (S//SI)

(S//SI) This past year, I had the opportunity to spend two months as a NIST analyst in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The deployment was a classic NIST operation in that it was designed to be temporary and the entire team was composed of personnel from several intelligence agencies, including NSA, CIA, NSA, and DIA. However, the deployment was problematic from the beginning. To start with, it had to be organized at the last minute, since the US troop deployment to Haiti came about unexpectedly.

(S//SI) Adding to the confusion, it was SOUTHCOM (U.S. Southern Command) HQ that requested the NIST deployment and not the Marines on the ground in Haiti. As a result of this, there was some friction on site between the Marines running the military compound and our NIST team. Gear that would normally deploy with the NIST was left behind because NIST planners had been told that tents, electric power, and air conditioning would be provided on site. When we arrived, none of this equipment was available and we had to send for our gear. As a result, the normal set-up period of 24 hours turned into more than a week, during which period I read several books and tried to stay hydrated.



*(U//FOUO) Canadian and US intel tent compounds at CJTF-Haiti:
The Canadian tents are the robust green ones on the left, the
smaller green ones in the center are US.*

(S//SI) We finally received all of our gear, but only after spending a week set up in a basic tent with a few fans and lots of hot computer gear. (This miserably hot experience was replicated later in the final weeks of the deployment when our generator's power core fused together creating, in the words of an engineer back at NSA, "a giant paper weight"). On the worst days without AC, it would take me 15 minutes for my shirt to become soaked with sweat just by sitting in the tent.

(C) The biggest operational hurdle to overcome in an environment like Haiti is simply operational familiarity. While many of the military operators with CENTCOM (Central Command) are now familiar with the value-added capabilities that a NIST type element can provide, this is certainly not always the case elsewhere. The military is designed to operate as an organic unit, and for a unit from SOUTHCOM unaccustomed to working with national-level intelligence assets, the NIST functions like a synthetic organ or body part. The Marine host tried to incorporate the new piece as best it could. With this in mind, strong communication between NIST leaders and military commanders is essential both early and



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often.

(TS//SI) The biggest advantage of being forward-deployed is that you have physical access to people on the ground as well as electronic connectivity to the analytic core back at NSAW. This is an amazingly potent combination and can outweigh the disadvantage that most forward-deployed analysts do not have years of background on the target they are working. Remember that every person you physically contact while forward-deployed represents someone that is often beyond the reach of the target analyst at the Fort.

(TS//SI) So while I was very limited in my knowledge of the target when I arrived in Haiti, my **access** to target knowledge was unmatched. The Caribbean and Haiti target offices are representative of so many that struggle here in the agency. They are 5-7 people deep but they do the work of 50. Their production is top notch and any time I had questions, I knew whom to turn to. Within the NIST itself, the CIA personnel often have years of experience in the target and they have their own access to personnel and historical databases for targets of interest.



(U) A view of the dining tents. The green wall is actually the fence to the outside world; the green border was hung on the chain-link fence to prevent children from begging for food while soldiers ate their meals.



(U//FOUO) A military chow line was set up with "T-rats" (T-rations... ready-to-eat food that comes in trays for easy preparation). Odds are that the signature meat on the plates in the picture is some sort of pressed turkey or chicken meat product with gravy. I am directly in the back, accompanied by personnel from the other intel agencies.

(U//FOUO) For background on the Haiti mission, see a [related story](#) from April. Watch for part two of this article tomorrow!

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